

NO SHAME ZONE

DISCUSSION AND STUDY GUIDE

Exposing the Hidden Bondage of Shame
and Effectively Dealing with It!

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Introduction



This book is the study guide meant to complement *NO SHAME ZONE: Exposing the Hidden Bondage of Shame*. *NO SHAME ZONE* was written as a result of a shame experience which went unrecognized for a long period. One morning, the Lord actually revealed the shame by merely speaking to my heart saying, “Shame is operating!” I admit that I had no idea what the Lord was speaking about. I instantly went in search to find the answer. What I came to realize was that most people can recognize a sinful act or condition. However, they may not recognize the hidden shame, as an emotional and spiritual bondage, that may attach to the person as a result of the original act.

People might often repent of sins, but because they do not recognize shame, there is difficulty and walking in freedom. It is very hard to overcome something that a person does not even realize is a factor. This work is meant to help people understand the hidden bondage of shame by exposing it. In addition, the heart of the matter is to help people effectively deal with shame so they may walk in freedom. Once the person is free of the devastating effects of shame, that person may also recognize the bondage of shame in other people. David said in Psalm 51, “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by your generous Spirit. *Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You*” (Ps. 51:12-13). Helping others to walk in freedom from shame creates an ongoing and perpetual ministry of people who can help other people walk in freedom.

The nature of the questions contained in the study guide are rhetorical in nature. They are meant to stir thoughts and to provoke new ways to consider old problems. I say that to express that there are no hard and fast, right or wrong answers. The scriptures of the Holy Bible should provide all answers to the questions posed. My prayer is that as you engage in study, discussion, and self-reflection that the Holy Spirit will begin to quicken you to move into more purity and righteousness in life. It is only as people are delivered from the bondage of Satan that they can be fully what the Lord has called them to be.

Chapter 1

Shame and Blame



Shame is a damaging emotional bondage. In Scripture, shame is the first thing that Satan put on Adam and Eve to hold them in bondage. In God's presence when there is a healthy relationship with the Lord, there is no shame, no matter what past events have colored someone's life. However, in the realm of guilt, shame is quick on the heels to apprehend the mind, will, and emotions of a person who feels unworthy to receive anything good from God.

Blame is failure or inability to take responsibility for one's actions. The memory is too painful or causes too much intense discomfort, so a person cannot simply say, "I did it ...!" The function of blame is to take the heat off and cast attention onto others. Blame is the intentional deflection of responsibility from oneself to another for the purpose of emotional peace.

In an attempt to identify shame and blame, and to begin to see how this pair of emotional hindrances work, answer these questions or discuss them with others.

Discussion and Study Questions

1. Describe shame in your own words.
2. Describe some of the ways that shame may come upon a person, creating a hidden bondage. Why is shame often very difficult to detect? How can a person walk in freedom if they do not recognize the source of bondage?

3. Shame was the first negative response to the first sin of Adam and Eve. Why would Satan use shame in the first three chapters of Scripture as a tool to further place them in bondage? What does that tell us about the nature and power of shame as a tool of Satan to hold people in bondage?
4. How is shame different than guilt or responsibility? How is it that confession of a sin may not deal effectively with the shame that may have attached to a person? Can a person effectively understand and separate the underlying sin from the shame that may be associated with the sin?
5. After Adam and Eve were in shame, the first thing they did was hide. Why did Adam and Eve hide from God? What do you surmise that they hoped to accomplish by hiding in shame?
6. What do people hope to accomplish by hiding? Why is hiding an ineffective coping tool for dealing with shame? Other than hiding, what are more effective ways of dealing with the shame that Satan would put on people?
7. Why do people who have been ashamed often try to blame or cast responsibility on others? What effect does blame have in keeping people in bondage to shame?

8. What effect does blame have in preventing people from taking responsibility for their own actions? How do shame and blame of another person, for example in an abuse situation, work to keep people in bondage?

9. How does blame *appear* to deflect shame?

10. If a person can take responsibility for the thing which has caused shame, how will that facilitate healing and restoration?

Chapter 2

Partners in Crime: Pride and Shame



Shame often is the thing that prevents people from getting help, deliverance, and freedom. Because people are fearful or humiliated, they often do not want to draw attention to their situation. It may be easier to live with shame than it is to have confrontation with it. Shame is extremely subtle but very devastating to the lives of people who are burdened by it.

The partnership of pride and shame is a circular argument that creates a stronghold that is hard to identify because of its subtlety. Pride will keep the shame hidden because people who are bound in pride will not expose a shameful situation. Pride will keep people from seeking freedom. Shame will protect the stronghold of pride because people are so shamed they cannot bring the matter to light for fear of rejection or judgment. In other words, a person in shame will hide and a person in pride will put on a good front. However, the truth is the tool of Jesus that will break the lies of Satan. John says, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

Discussion and Study Questions

1. Describe pride in your own words.
2. Describe how they are tandem buddies to work to secure the ongoing bondage of a person. How do the twins of pride and shame work together to keep people in bondage?

3. Being humble before the Lord is like medicine. How does humility work to combat pride in a person's life?

4. Shame is a lie from Satan. How does truth of the Word work to combat shame in a person's life? How can a person use the truth to be set free of both pride and shame?

5. Why is the operation of shame in a person's life hard to detect? Once shame is detected, what are some effective ways of overcoming the devastating effects of shame?

6. People may have had very devastating shameful occurrences in the past. How does having a relationship with Jesus Christ bring peace and freedom from shame?

7. Freedom in Jesus does not change the past, but how can past shame be considered a blessing for God's kingdom? How can people use past shame to work for good?

8. How does God's grace help believers deal with pain and shame? With Pride?

9. How should a person suffering from shame deal with people who have been less than charitable if the cause of the shame has been revealed? How should a person who is bound in shame prepare to deal with people who may be less than charitable if the root cause of the shame is revealed in the future?

10. It matters more what God knows about a person than what other people think about a person. How did Jesus deal with people who were not kind to him? People who judged him adversely? How did Jesus Christ deal with people who were less than charitable to others? How should Christ-like Christians deal with people who judge them harshly?

11. How can a person use those things which have caused bondage to shame in the past as tools to glorify God in the future? Give some examples from life and from Scripture.

Chapter 3

People Could Not Condemn and Jesus Did Not Condemn



Every person but Jesus is a sinner who may be saved by grace. Every person has private or public hindrances that may bring on shame (which may be sins or other shameful hurts). One sin is not better than another sin, so no person has the right or opportunity to condemn another person. Jesus has the right to condemn, but he does not. The woman caught in adultery had been caught in the act of sin. Jesus did not say one chastising word to her. He showered her with love. The people who would condemn her left in silence after acknowledging their own sinful condition before the Lord.

Discussion and Study Questions

1. Describe how shame can cause isolation of a person who carries the burden of shame?
2. A woman caught in the act of adultery was brought before Jesus. He said to the crowd in John 7:24, “Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.” How was the crowd judging the woman? What is the subtle meaning of that statement?
3. There are times when judgmental people will drag a person before a crowd, figuratively or literally, and expose that person to public disgrace. It often happens when the matter

could have been handled privately. How can a person who has been exposed to public disgrace make something good out of the embarrassing and painful situation?

4. With the woman caught in adultery, many people had an opinion about her and the shameful situation. Who had the only opinion that really mattered? Why? What does that mean for people who have been publically exposed in shame? What does that mean for people who have an opinion about a situation that does not directly involved them?
5. Read John 8:2-11 carefully. What was Jesus' response to the woman caught in sin? What did he say to her? What did she say to Jesus? What hope does that give to a person caught in sin?
6. John 3:16-17 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Was Jesus' mission on earth to condemn? Who on earth has the power to condemn? What does that mean for a person who is condemned by other people?
7. When the day of judgment comes, each person will stand alone before the Father. No other person will stand before the judgment seat offering an accusation. Should people be held in bondage to shame when no other person is worthy to condemn them?

8. Even though the woman was caught in sin, did Jesus *shame* her? Are there scriptural examples of Jesus imposing shame on the people? If Jesus does not impose shame, then who does?

9. Who uses shame to control people? Why should a person subject him or herself to anything that is an exclusive tool of Satan?

Chapter 4

Shame, Distress, and Restoration



The biggest misstep of any disciple was when Peter denied Jesus three times on the night before he was crucified. Peter was vehement in his denial of Jesus. Peter's denial grew with intensity and greater resolve with each statement. At first, Peter merely denied knowing Jesus. Second, he denied Jesus with an oath, which is a solemn affirmation. Finally, Peter denied him by calling down curses. The King James Version says, "He began to curse and to swear" (Matt. 26:74). The final intensity of Peter's denial was severe. When Peter recognized what he had done, he was caught up in the bitter emotions of hurt and shame.

After his resurrection, Jesus came to find Peter and the rest of the disciples who were hiding out by the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had a job for Peter and he could not do it on a fishing boat. Jesus gave Peter the job of feeding his sheep. Peter wanted to fish. Sheep are not found in the sea! Jesus redirected him into service and that was a huge part of the restoration. The only one who wins by people living in on-going shame is Satan, the accuser of the brethren. If all people who sinned and who are in shame are throw-away people, there would not be many people in God's kingdom.

Jesus brought restoration to Peter and by so doing enabled Peter to walk into the call the Jesus had on his life. Many people in shame are not able to fulfill the call of Jesus because they are hiding from the world. Jesus wants believers to be *in the world* but not *of the world*. The restoration of Jesus removes the barrier of being concerned about what the world thinks. The restoration of Jesus allows restored people to be concerned only about what Jesus thinks.

Discussion and Study Questions

1. Many people mightily used by God have a shameful past. Shame can lead to repentance or it can lead to lifelong brokenness. It is a choice each person has to make: When Jesus is near, will the shamed person jump out of the boat and let Jesus restore? Or will that person set out to sea to go fish in avoidance and isolation? Each shamed person must ask themselves these questions.
2. How did Peter's actions of denying Christ lead to his shame?
3. Each person should ask, "Have I ever disowned Christ?" In Private? In Public? What is the on-going response to denying Christ? Did the denial lead to shame? Did the denial hinder me from going back to Jesus with repentance? Did it interfere with my relationship with Jesus? How can the relationship with Jesus be restored if it is suffering under shame or separation?
4. Peer pressure is a very strong tool of the enemy. Once a person has succumbed to peer pressure and denied Christ, how can the relationship be restored? How can peer pressure leading to other sins also cause a separation from Christ?
5. Describe the difference between Peter's sin and his shame as a result of the sin. Separate the sin from the shame. How did Jesus deal with both the sin and the shame of Peter?

6. When Jesus came to meet the disciples, Peter was the first one to rush to his side. Has Jesus ever come to you after a painful moment? Did you rush to his side? Did you pull away? How will you allow Jesus to restore you?

7. Jesus may want more, but he will meet a person where they are with what they have to offer at that moment. What can you offer to Jesus right now? What do you want to be able to offer him later?

8. Peter made himself available for restoration. How did Jesus restore him? What was the impact of that encounter on Peter's future ministry? Why was restoration necessary?

9. Jesus will not distinguish between blessings bestowed on people because of favoritism. Did Jesus seek Peter? If Jesus sought Peter, will he seek others who are burdened by shame and distress? Is Jesus looking for perfection? Is Jesus looking for a willingness to surrender to him? What does that say to people who are burdened by shame and distress?

10. After Peter's denial Jesus again said, "Follow me!" Peter was not damaged beyond repair so that he could not be used! Each person should realize that denials do not end a call to follow Jesus. What call has Jesus put on your life? What are you doing to walk into his call? Can you put past failures aside to follow Jesus? If Jesus can move on, what does it say about a person who refuses to move on and put past failures aside?

Chapter 5

Wails That Stop Jesus



There was a blind man named Bartimaeus who sat by the roadside to beg. For Bartimaeus, his roadside perch was a place of shame and ostracization. The name Bartimaeus literally means the “son of the unclean.” This points to a deeper spiritual meaning because he was spiritually unclean. He was not even allowed in the city to beg, but an outcast among outcasts.

Blind Bartimaeus would not be silenced in his desperate attempt to be noticed by Jesus as he walked by on the road. As seen in Scripture, Jericho was not on Jesus’ usual travel path. Did Bartimaeus sense that this could be his only opportunity for a visitation by Jesus? The crowd tried to silence this man, but he refused to be silenced. The crowd’s attempt to silence him only encouraged his louder and more boisterous pleas to Jesus. The opposition fanned the flame to his desperation and he cried even more. The beggar was begging for something that would last longer than a few coins. Desperation was the most important factor in his healing.

Discussion and Study Questions

1. Please describe desperation for Jesus in your own words. How would your desperation look? What would be the outward manifestation for the one who is desperate for Jesus?
2. Sometimes a person may bear shame, not because of their own actions, but because of family failures such as poverty, bad behavior, curses that become evident to the public, and ongoing sins, etc. How did the story of Bartimaeus show that family lines do not

define who a person is to Jesus? How did the desperation for Jesus move him beyond the status of being from an unclean family?

3. Bartimaeus was considered “unclean” and was expelled from the city. How do you think that Bartimaeus felt about that? What hurt, emotions, or hang-ups could that have brought to his life? Isolation? Shame? Who are the “unclean” of this age? How did Jesus minister to those who were “unclean” in Scripture?
4. Bartimaeus was desperate to be noticed by Jesus. Many were calling to Jesus but only one person caused him to stop. What is to be gained by a shamed person stopping Jesus in his tracks? How did his desperation change his life? How did his desperation overcome his shame and rejection?
5. Why did Bartimaeus’ refusal to take “No” for an answer cause Jesus to stop? What do you think Jesus saw in Bartimaeus that he did not see in the rest of the crowd?
6. People of the crowd wanted Bartimaeus to be invisible. How should a person burdened by shame respond to the crowd who wants them to be invisible? Why? Who would benefit most if a person keeps silent as Jesus passes by? Why? Why should the crowd care if Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus?

7. What did the actions of Bartimaeus in shrieking at the top of his lungs convey to Jesus about his desire to be healed?

8. The first thing that Bartimaeus did when Jesus noticed him was to throw off his mantle or cloak. What did that signify in the realm of God's kingdom? What are the personal mantles that you need to throw off to walk in the healing and freedom offered by Jesus?

9. How did the encounter of Bartimaeus with Jesus change his identity? What changes to your identity could occur by desperately seeking Jesus and by voluntarily throwing off the mantles that hinder?

Chapter 6

Shame Followed by Repentance: No Barrier to Finding God's Heart



David was a man after the heart of God but he was a man who was sinful during times and seasons in his life. His biggest and most noteworthy sin was when he had an adulterous affair with a married woman, impregnating her. That was not the worst part however. David arranged for the death of her husband to cover up the infidelity. David did not get away with the plan; he was confronted by the prophet Nathan.

David thought his actions were done in private. However, the Lord always knows what is done in private as if it had been done in the public square. Nathan knew about David's sin with Bathsheba. Sometimes people feel awkward about confessing their sins before God. However, God already knows! Nothing done in private is a surprise to him. That awkward refusal to bring something to the Lord is a lie of Satan, who does not want people to confess and be free of the effects of their sins. Usually what is done in private will eventually be known in public. There is no ranking of sin in God's eyes because one sin is the same as another to him. A white lie is the same as murder: Satan has done both and put God's people in bondage using either wile. God hates all sin. From the human perspective, people like to rank sin and say that some are worse than others, but that is not true. God hates sin because all sin acts to separate God from his people.

Discussion and Study Questions

1. Describe in your own words how deception can lead to shame?
2. There are times that the Lord will give prophetic insight to discerning or prophetic people. Why did the Lord tell the prophet Nathan what David had done? How did that exposure allow David to engage in repentance? Was it judgment or mercy that caused God to send Nathan to confront David? Was it both judgment and mercy? How could the confrontation by Nathan be seen as mercy by God?
3. How did David's immediate repentance after being confronted by the prophet Nathan change the judgment of the Lord? What did the immediate repentance say about David's heart for God?
4. Sometimes people are even too embarrassed to tell the Lord their sins. How does Satan use this lie to keep people in bondage? If God already knows sins, why is it necessary for people to confess their sins before the Lord? What happens to a person when they are able to confess their sins before the Lord? What happens to the bondage of Satan as a result of the confession?

5. David immediately repented for his sins. Adam and Eve did not. How was David's immediate reaction different than Adam and Eve's immediate reaction to God when he confronted them with their sins? How is repentance important for moving beyond shame and guilt?

6. David's repentance, as seen in Psalm 51, shows a man who truly has repentance in his heart. The Lord is the ultimate judge of a man's heart. How is true heartfelt repentance different than simply giving lip service to repentance? How does Psalm 51 illustrate true repentance from the heart?

7. In Psalm 51:3, David said "My sin is always before me." The constant reminder of shame of sin is a powerful tool of the enemy. How does shame keep sin always in the forefront of a person's mind? How does repentance remove the constant reminder of a person's sin and replace it with the grace of God? In a state of repentance, what is the primary focus of a person's thoughts? In a state of shame, what is the primary focus of a person's thoughts?

8. David also said, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. *Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you*" (Ps. 51:12-13). How did David plan to use his past failures to benefit the kingdom of God? To glorify God? When a person has been turned back from a sinful past, how can Satan's worst be turned into God's best?

9. Ultimately, David's predominant desire for his life was to serve God. Even though David had a serious moral failure, he is more often remembered for his actions in serving God. Please read 13:22. What is the legacy of David's life? How did David, a man who walked in great sin and shame, come to be known as a man after the heart of God?

10. In Acts 13:22, who gave the testimony that David was a man after God's own heart? What does this say about the power of restoration after a moral failure or other shaming events in a person's life? What was it that made David have the distinction as the only person in Scripture of whom that testimony was given?

Chapter 7

Hiding in Broad Daylight



Shame is one of the heaviest burdens that a person can carry. Just thinking about the things that have brought shame can send a person into hiding. One encounter with Jesus transformed a nameless woman's life. She had been living in bondage to a shameful past that made her feel like an outcast in her hometown. Her identity is unknown, but the woman from Samaria became a compelling witness to the goodness of Jesus after she experienced the power of Jesus' love. Many call her the first evangelist.

This woman had been so filled with shame that she avoided the people of her community. After an encounter with Jesus, she became a powerful witness for him. She said, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" (John 4:29). She testified about his prophetic words and then left it for the people to draw their own conclusions. Considering Jesus prophetic statements of the events of her life, if he told her everything she ever did it would have been a powerful witness to the people of the town. The very thing that kept her in bondage—the reaction of others to her past actions that left her in shame—was the very tool that she used to share about Jesus. The tool of the enemy became the instrument of God's kingdom. Her past mistakes became the vehicle to convince people of the goodness of Jesus and that the Messiah had come! Instead of hiding from her past, she put her past in the center of the discussion about Jesus being the Messiah! That which the enemy meant for harm, God used for his good!

Discussion and Study Questions

1. It appears from Scripture that Jesus went to Samaria to encounter a nameless woman who was burdened by shame. Scripture says Jesus “*needed* to go through Samaria.” Why did Jesus *need* to go through Samaria? Why did the woman come to the well in the heat of the day? What was she avoiding by her actions?
2. Was it a divine plan that the woman at the well would encounter Jesus as he sat alone by the well? If the crowd of disciples had been there, do you suppose the woman would have turned back before she arrived at the well? Was there something special about the woman and Jesus meeting alone? In the hiddenness of shame, could the woman have come into a crowd?
3. Why did Jesus tell her to go get her husband knowing that she did not have a husband? Was Jesus trying to shame her more? Was Jesus trying to embarrass her? Was Jesus merely trying to bring the point of her shame into plain view?
4. What did Jesus gain by exposing the truth to the woman? How did the woman respond to the exposure of the truth of her past actions?
5. Fear of exposure is enough to keep people in hiding. Jesus’ statements to the woman illustrate the truth that God does indeed know everything that we have ever done. What would a person hope to gain by failing to bring those matters before the Lord for confession, repentance, and forgiveness?

6. The woman initially tried to change the subject as Jesus brought up her past. The first defense mechanism was to deflect the attention away from herself and talk about Jesus. How did Jesus respond to the attempts of the woman to get the attention off of herself and onto another subject? Why would Jesus not allow the woman the comfort of changing the subject? What was the end result for the woman by the full exposure of her past by Jesus?

7. As the woman left to go back into the town, she left her water jar in the dust. She was no longer interested in natural water because she had been exposed to the living water of the Holy Spirit. What does this reflect about her change of circumstance?

8. Please read Revelation 12:10-11. The very thing that had kept the woman in bondage, shame and embarrassment in front of the townspeople, is the very thing that she exposed when she went back into the town. How did the woman at the well use her past brokenness, bondage, and shame to witness to the goodness of Jesus as the Messiah? How do the testimonies of people who have broken free of Satan's grip become powerful tools for the kingdom of God?

9. As the woman began to testify as to the transformation in her life from the encounter with Jesus, what happened to her? What happened to the townspeople?

10. This woman who had been unable to be seen by the people became a witness to the glory of God. Because of her testimony many came to Jesus. How was her final position different from her initial position in front of the townspeople? How does that change reflect her full restoration?

11. How did the hardships in the woman's life make her a better witness for Jesus Christ? What does that say about people who have experienced hardship in life, but have not yet overcome the shame and embarrassment to be a good witness? What encouragement does this offer to one seeking to overcome shame and embarrassment?

Chapter 8

Love is the Answer



Shame keeps Christians in bondage and limits many people from walking out the walk of faith that the Lord has for them. Shame is a big dog collar of bondage that prevents people from going beyond the end of the tether. It is silent and hard to detect, and therefore very limiting to the walk of faith.

It is time to move on from where each one has been to where God wants each one to be. People are called to walk out of the darkness of shame into the light of adoption. Sons and daughters are loved. Even with past failures they are accepted into the family of God. The nature of God is all about love, acceptance, and adoption into his family, regardless of the bondages and shames of the past. The Lord Jesus died to take away the shame and reproach of the world.

We can only be who the Lord has called us to be if we take our eyes off of ourselves and seek God and love others. The Word says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Phil. 2:3–4). The greater valuation of everyone else on the planet and putting others first demands that the “me-ism” of shame must go. The consciousness of one’s self must yield to the love of others. This requires valuing others more than self in personal humility. The Word says that anything less is selfish and vain—and falls short of the standard of Christ. Those are hard words, but they are truth. The word of God says, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

Discussion and Study Questions

1. Moving people to transition from where they are to where God wants them to be is an important goal of this book. It is evident in Scripture that people who have made serious mistakes have been later used by the Lord for his many purposes. Name people from Scripture who have made terrible mistakes but were later used by God in powerful ways to advance the kingdom of God on earth.
2. Malachi 3:6 says, “I the Lord do not change.” If the Lord forgave and used broken people in Scripture, what would prevent him from forgiving and using broken people in this age?
3. What will happen if people who suffer under shame continue to listen to the lie of Satan? What will happen if they break free to serve God? Who wins by people breaking free? Who wins by people remaining in bondage?
4. In Scripture there many paradoxes. One paradox says to be exalted one must go lower, and to be honored, one must be of no reputation. In the spiritual understanding what does this mean for people who have been honored by the world? What does this mean for people who have been dishonored by the world?
5. The only true valuation that matters is the valuation of God. Describe in your own words how self-centeredness may lead to a shame mentality.

6. Describe in your own words how shame is bound up in worldliness. Describe in your own words how honor and exaltation may also be bound up in worldliness.

7. Describe how love of self, or even loathing of self, may stand in the way of the love of Christ or the love of others. How can the love of others and the love of Jesus Christ be a key to overcoming the barrier of shame?

8. Describe how living in shame prevents a person from fully manifesting the love of God? Describe how living in shame prevents a person from fully manifesting the righteous love of him or herself or others. Describe the difference between ungodly self-love and godly self-love. How are (1) the unholy barriers of shame and (2) the understanding that humanity is created in the image of God inconsistent with each other?

9. What are some specific ways that a person can recast his or her focus from “me” to God and others? Name specific scriptural references that help to redefine the purpose and focus of life from “me” to God and others. How do the words of a person help to frame who that person becomes?

10. Describe Jesus’ response to the people he encountered who had been burdened by shame. How does love help to loosen the lock of shame on a person’s life?

Chapter 9

Abortion: There is No Shame Too Great for Jesus



Abortion is surrounded by a huge conspiracy of silence. There have been millions and millions of babies aborted in America since 1973. That means that there are millions and millions (multiplied many times over) of mothers, fathers, grandparents, friends, medical workers, counselors, pastors, and many others who have kept silent about their involvement in abortion over those decades. Abortion is a bondage and shame for many more than just the mother of the unborn child. Shame is a tool and stronghold that is largely unknown because of the conspiracy of silence among those who are in shame. They have trouble saying those things because of spiritual opposition that would keep them silent and in bondage. The enemy keeps people in bondage by keeping them silent. This is particularly true of abortion because of the social stigma, divided agendas of the political and public arenas, and the constant barrage of news media about the issue.

Discussion and Study Questions

1. Please read Ephesians 5:11. How does the conspiracy of silence keep people in bondage to the enemy? How are the spoken words powerful to bring healing? What does Satan hope to gain by keeping people silent?

2. Read Revelation 12:10-11. How does the kingdom of God benefit by people giving testimonies of how they have overcome the accuser of the brethren? How will that help bring the issue of abortion into focus for a divided public?

3. Abortion may lead to spiritual bondage that is often not recognized in people who participate in all aspects of abortion. Spiritual bondage may impact many such as those:
 - a) Who have had abortion,
 - b) Who have paid or encouraged an abortion,
 - c) Who compelled an abortion for a teenage girl who did not really have a voice of her own in the situation, or
 - d) Who was a medical provider for abortions.

How does participation in legalized abortion create spiritual bondage? Who may be in spiritual bondage from abortion? The mother of the child? The father of the child? The grandparents of the child? Medical providers? Even people who drive someone to have an abortion? Facilitators of abortions? How does abortion become an equal opportunity oppressor?

4. Abortion is often seen as a way out of a challenging situation. How does fear often play into the decision to have an abortion? What about Pride? Hopelessness? Anxiety? What other tools and lies of the enemy facilitate the decision to have an abortion?

5. Please read 1 John 1:9 and Proverbs 28:13. How do revelation and confession assist in bringing resolution of the bondage of shame, not only for abortion, but for all sins? How do confession and renouncement of sins bring mercy?

6. Does the Lord recognize an unborn child as a person? How has the government position that life begins at birth – or even after birth – create a fallacy to make it easy for people to make the decision to have an abortion? Describe spiritual blindness that makes abortion look like an attractive alternative to end an unwanted pregnancy?

7. The Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004 is a United States law which recognizes a child in utero as a legal victim, if they are injured or killed during the commission of any of over 60 listed federal crimes of violence. The law defines “child in utero” as “a member of the species *Homo sapiens*, at any stage of development, who is carried in the womb.” However, the government recognizes the right to end a pregnancy at any time before birth. How did these inconsistencies create confusion?

8. Please read Psalm 139:13-18, Jeremiah 1:4-5, and Luke 1:39-41. What does the Bible say about God’s recognition of the life of a person even from before birth from within the womb? What does the Bible say about John the Baptist being filled with the Spirit of God from before birth? What does the Bible say about Jeremiah from before birth?

9. Many people in Scripture have been guilty of very serious crimes, including murder. What witness does this give to participants in abortion of the grace and mercy of God to forgive sins involving the shedding of innocent blood? What witness does this give that people who have participated in abortion may have a call on their lives to serve God in mighty way that will impact and advance God’s kingdom?

10. Who are some of the people in Scripture who have innocent blood on their hands who have been later used by the Lord for his kingdom purposes? What transpired between the sinful actions of those people and their usefulness to God later? How were they transformed? How did God minister to their needs? How did they reflect a change of condition in their hearts and minds?

11. Please read Romans 5:1-5. How does hope in the Lord take away shame? From reading Scripture, how does the Lord respond to true and heartfelt repentance?

12. Please read Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is a cry of heartfelt repentance after David had an adulterous affair and murdered the innocent husband of the woman he had seduced. How did David propose to use the lessons learned from overcoming his past failures to teach others not to make the same mistakes that he had made? Please read Romans 8:28. What does this teach about God using everything for the good of his kingdom when people are willing to be used by him?

Chapter 10

Satan's Lie: The Shame of the Victim



The conquests of David in killing Goliath with a well placed stone and saving his people are often celebrated. However, the later troubles of King David and his children are not as well known. Second Samuel 13 contains one of the most tragic stories of Scripture. David's son Amnon lusted after his beautiful sister, Tamar, which led to her rape. It was sexual molestation within David's family. Amnon claimed to be desperately in love with Tamar, but it was really a vile obsession manipulated by the enemy Satan. This set of events not only released shame on Tamar, but also on Amnon, David, Absalom, and the rest of the family. The far reaching implications of this event brought destruction and heart-ache for many years and spanned across many generations.

The question then becomes what is the proper way to deal with a terrible crime or abuse that is brought about by someone of greater power exercising that power over someone of lesser power? People who have been victimized must receive love and mercy. However, love and mercy are for healing but not for coddling brokenness. At times people can become broken in woundedness so that they never move on to healing and wholeness. Sometimes a victimization mentality serves to keep people in bondage. The teachings of Jesus show that the love and mercy that hurting victims receive must also be given to the perpetrators of the crime. As a victim learns to walk in forgiveness and mercy, the Lord brings full restoration and healing to the victims.

Out of the very words of Jesus, there is no place for the victim mentality, including the shame that comes with it. If a person is injured, Jesus was injured more. Jesus demonstrated in his example that there is no place for victimization in his kingdom. Jesus was surely victimized, but he did not take on the role of a victim. As he hung on the cross looking at the ones who had nailed him there, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what

they are doing.’ He watched as they divided up his clothes by casting lots” (Luke 23:34). He gave forgiveness and he did not harbor hurt or resentment. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, forgave his murderers even as they were stoning him to death. Acts reports, “Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep (died)” (Acts 7:60, explanatory note added). The overcomers not only walk in freedom, but also should expect great rewards coming at a future time.

Discussion and Study Questions

1. Amnon was encouraged by his crafty cousin Jonadab. He encouraged Amnon’s entitlement to take the course of action that he did. How could Amnon have effectively silenced the evil voice of Jonadab who encouraged him to abuse Absalom’s sister? What could Amnon have done differently that could have created a change of circumstance in the story found in 2 Samuel 13?
2. How did David play a part in this plot? How were David’s actions foolish? How did David’s prior sin appear to play a part in his inability to correct his son Amnon?
3. Tamar was an innocent victim in this plot. Why should Tamar feel shame for something that was not her fault? Why should Tamar feel guilt for something she tried to prevent? Does it make sense for a victim to bear the burden of the abuse? How does the enemy win by keeping the victim in silence? How could Tamar have reacted differently in this situation? How could Absalom have reacted differently in this situation?

4. After Amnon had raped Tamar, Scripture says that his love turned hate. What were Amnon's true emotions? What does the story reveal about Amnon's character? What does the story reveal about Tamar's character?

5. Absalom, brother of both Amnon and Tamar, also encouraged the conspiracy of silence. Why did Absalom encourage Tamar to be silent? What did he hope to gain for himself? What did he hope to gain for Tamar? What did he hope to gain for the rest of the family? What was the end result of Absalom's silence? How did keeping this shame hidden allow it to fester until there was a boiling eruption later on? Why did Absalom not go to David with his grievance?

6. How did David's failure or inability to deal with Amnon's sin create a much greater problem later on? What impact did that have on Tamar's shame? What impact did that have on Absalom's growing hatred? What impact did that have on ongoing brokenness for the entire family? How did David's sin with Bathsheba hinder him from being a godly father and king in this situation?

7. How does Jesus' kingdom call for a different response than to keep things hidden? What happens when the plot and plan of the enemy is left unchecked? What happens when the plot and plan of the enemy is exposed?

8. Please read Ephesians 5:11. Let us ask some questions for speculation: What would have happened if Amnon had been confronted about his sin? What would have happened if Tamar had forgiven Amnon? What would have happened if Amnon had paid or been held

accountable for the injuries and damages to Tamar? What would have happened if David had taken charge of his family immediately when these events happened? What would have happened if Absalom had forgiven Amnon? Can you see a different result if things had been handled differently from the beginning? What does it say about avoiding the conspiracy of silence and having nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness?

9. Victimization often keeps people in bondage because people feel that they are justified in the emotional responses of anger, hatred, bitterness, pain, etc. How much grief and pain resulted from the hiddenness of shame in this situation? Could it have been avoided? How does victimization keep people in bondage?

10. Please read Luke 6:27-36. What is Jesus response to a victim mentality? Did Jesus have a victim mentality? Was Jesus victimized? How did Jesus respond to unfair treatment? How did Jesus respond to humiliation? How did Jesus respond to being falsely accused? What did Jesus say about responding to enemies? Those who curse you? Those who steal from you? Those who mistreat you? Those who hate you?

Chapter 11

Forgiveness is the Key



If we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven! It is a harsh reality of Scripture that is not preached often. That idea may seem to put more burden on the victim and give the perpetrator a free ride. That is not true because vengeance belongs to the Lord. The guilt or innocence of a perpetrator is between the person and God. However, if a victim cannot forgive, they will carry the eternal burden of that unforgiveness. In Matthew 6:14-15 Jesus says, “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. *But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*” Luke follows suit by quoting Jesus saying, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37). Mark also shows the words of Jesus by saying, “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything *against anyone, forgive them*, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25).

Discussion and Study Questions

1. Why must a person forgive? How important is forgiveness to walking in freedom? What happens when a person refuses to forgive? What are the consequences?

2. John 20:23 says, “If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” What does this Scripture say about the importance of forgiveness? If a person chooses not to forgive another person, what is the end status of the unforgiving person? Is unforgiveness worth the cost that will be required in the end?

3. If a person loves and trusts God, should not that person trust God enough to deal mercifully and justly with the people who have hurt them? When a terrible sin is committed against a person, whom does Psalm 51:3-4 say the sin is against? Why is that relevant for this discussion of forgiveness? How does the Bible say that we are to react to our “enemies”? When sins are against God alone, what does that mean for a person who would hold others sins against them?

4. How does a person forgive when he or she does not “feel” like forgiving? Is forgiveness an emotion or is it an act of the will of a person? What is the difference between forgiveness as a choice or an emotional feeling? How can a person translate the choice to forgive into a change of heart or emotion?

5. Please read Matthew 18:21-35. How can a person know if he or she has truly forgiven another for a wrong? What if a person forgives one day, but the next day the feelings of unforgiveness reemerge? What should be done if feelings of unforgiveness come back? How often are people supposed to forgive a particular person who has continued to sin against them? Why?

6. Healing forgiveness is more for the victim than the perpetrator of the sin. What if the perpetrator has not repented to the victim? Is it required that forgiveness by a victim is

contingent upon repentance by the perpetrator? Is there any scriptural support for the idea that a perpetrator must be repentant to be forgiven by a victim? (Note: This is different than a discussion of forgiveness by God for the sins a perpetrator has committed. This is talking about the victim forgiving a perpetrator for a sin against the victim. This leaves the final judgment to God. A perpetrator's repentance or judgment by God is between that person and God alone.)

7. What if the person who needs to be forgiven is deceased? Is it necessary to have an ongoing relationship with someone who has been forgiven? Is it okay to feel anger and want justice for perpetrator?
8. How does prayer aid in forgiveness? What are appropriate prayers leading to healing for unforgiveness? Who is commissioned by God to bring judgment on another person?
9. How is unforgiveness a barrier to healing: emotional healing, spiritual healing, and physical healing? How is unforgiveness a barrier to reconciliation? How does a victimization mentality keep people in bondage?
10. Unforgiveness leading to bondage in life is just a preview of its bondage in death. A person may pray for the Lord to soften their heart to give them the grace to forgive when there seems to be no way to forgive. How does a person overcome the unforgiveness that will lead to separation from God in eternity? What can be done about unforgiveness? What are some ways that a person can begin to pray if they cannot even utter the words to choose forgiveness as an act of will?

A Message from the Author

Laura Henry Harris



I was an attorney for twenty years before leaving the practice of law to be in full time service to the Lord. That service has looked like many different things in the last several years. I attended Asbury Theological Seminary and United Theological Seminary, obtaining a Masters of Divinity and a Doctor of Ministry degree. I served as a pastor of a United Methodist Church for four years. I have traveled to many countries around the world for missions and ministry. Perhaps the greatest joy of my service to the Lord is to seek to hear his voice and to teach revelation of Scripture that the Lord has revealed to me. I am always interested in opportunities to teach and equip the body of believers, especially ministry leaders.

I intersect with believers from around the world through written works and social media, as well as travel. Our ministry is called “Where He Leads Me, Inc.” Free teaching videos are available on the Web address. Other books are available on the web page or at on-lines sources in either print or electronic forms. Check out Amazon, Kindle, iBook, and Nook.

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Salvation is Free, Discipleship is Not! Weighing the Cost of NOT Serving God!

Salvation is Free, Discipleship is Not! Weighing the Cost of NOT Serving God! is a cry to the Church of Jesus Christ to experience a wake up call. Time is short! The Church is called to wake up and be in a state of preparation and readiness for the return of the Lord. Jesus Christ is returning for a Bride who has made herself ready to meet her Groom. The body of Christ is drowsy or may have already fallen asleep. Sadly, some who think they are ready to meet Jesus will be mistaken. There will be many who hear those terrifying words, “Truly I tell you, I don’t know you” (Matt. 25:12). The Lord is not willing that any should perish. Scripture is very plain, however, that there are those who have confessed Christ with their mouths, but who have not known him in their hearts. They will be sent away into eternal damnation.

If you are uncomfortable with these words, this may be just the book for you. Please take the warning of the Lord to heart. There are many who have heard the Word of the Lord, but it has not been transformative in their lives.

In *Salvation is Free, Discipleship is Not!* the Lord speaks through a prophetic voice to call the Church to repent, to be wholeheartedly devoted, to avoid deception, to be radically obedient, to live in purity of life, to consume the Word of God, and to harvest souls of the lost. This book is a call for a transformation of the body of Christ. Salvation truly is free, but careful reading of Scripture confirms that discipleship should cost the believer a precious price.

Kingdom Citizenship Now!
Experience God's Kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven!

When God's presence and power come on earth, miracles happen. Learn why miracles happen. Investigate what hinders the kingdom of God from fully manifesting on earth. Understand what believers can do to invite the unending power of God on earth as it is in heaven.

First, *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* explores the authority of Jesus, the authority of the believer, and the power of the enemy, Satan. Jesus has all authority to rule and reign, and that leaves no authority for Satan! The enemy has lied to believers for far too long. *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* will give believers the tools and understanding needed to walk in God's kingdom realm everyday.

Second, *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* explores the who, what, and why of the miracles found in the Bible. Everything that happened in the Bible when Jesus and the disciples walked the earth can happen now! Believers can invite and experience miraculous provision, multiplication, healing, overcoming the laws of nature, and other miracles of God.

Third, *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* explores practical ways that believers can walk in kingdom citizenship on earth as it is in heaven. Believers who want to walk in the miracle power of God through the Holy Spirit will learn how to make their lives a conduit for the power of God. *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* shows believers how to live in a way that invites the presence of God in power.

Kingdom Citizenship Now! is full of new revelations and scriptural understanding. This book has over 900 biblical references. *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* is a vessel of God for new understanding into the meaning of even well-known passages. Experience God's Kingdom on earth, NOW!

***Who is the Bride?
A Mandate for the Church for Such a Time as This!***

Did you ever wonder why the Church struggles to walk in the blessing of the Lord that is promised in Scripture? Have you questioned why the Church grapples for relevance in the culture where evil is running amok?

The Lord promised that those who bless Israel will be blessed and those who curse Israel will be cursed. The Church must understand the biblical mandate to appeal to the King of kings for the salvation of the Jews. The inclusion of the Jews as a part of the bride of Christ will loose blessing and favor of the Lord on the Church.

After Esther appealed to King Xerxes for the Jews, the heart of the king changed! He gratuitously approached Esther to give her any petition that she wanted even before he knew if she had a request! This will be the status of the Church when the Church appeals to the King of kings for Israel to be loosed from the vile attack of Satan that would seek to destroy her.

Jews do not have to be Christians to be saved. They only have to believe and accept Yeshua as their Messiah. The Apostle Paul shows that the Jews do not have to stop being Jewish to follow Jesus. This revelation is transformative for both Israel and the Church. This book will change the future of the Church!

